

THE STORY OF FLO AND HARRY



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(I have pieced this story together from stories told to me by relatives and friends, and from research. It may not all be 100% correct but I am sure most of it is true - Judith Hassila).



This is the story of my mother and father, Florence Ada Godfrey and Henry (Harry) Taylor Burchmore and their life in Sydney.

Florence or Flo as she was called was born on 17th or 18th June 1906 - we were never quite sure which day it was as it said 18th on her birth certificate but she always insisted that it was the 17th. She had a hard childhood. She couldn't speak properly (or hardly at all) for the first years of her life as she apparently had ankyloglossia or tongue-tie and finally when she was about 4 years old a doctor recognised the problem and it was rectified. Flo had two older sisters, Sylvia and Myra and a younger brother James called Jimmy. Their mother died (probably of cancer) when they were quite young and much to their surprise their father brought home another woman and three other children that he had fathered with this woman. The new step-mother did not like the children from the first marriage and made life difficult for them. As soon as they finished school at 12 or 13 she forced them to go out and get a job and leave home. Sylvia and Myra got jobs in a sewing factory and lived in a boarding house and when it was Flo's turn to leave home they got her a job in the same factory. It was more difficult for their younger brother, Jimmy, as the depression came along and he couldn't find a job. He survived by collecting bottles and firewood and with the help of his sisters.



Left: Flo's mother, Rose Ada Godfrey

Below: House in Carlton where Flo grew up
(picture taken in 1974)



The sisters -
Left: Sylvia, Myra &
Flo ca 1926

Below: Flo, Sylvia
& Myra ca 1974



Jimmy, Flo's
younger brother
(only photo I can
find)



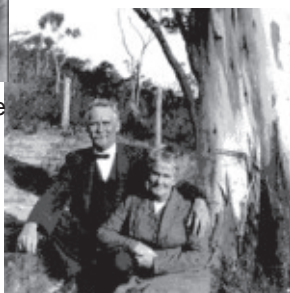
Harry was born in 1900 and lived in Alexandria for the first years of his life before moving to Arncliffe with his parents, Alice and George, in 1914. Harry had 10 brothers and sisters. His grandparents Emma and William came out to Australia from England on the ship Euphrates and arrived in Sydney in May 1852. They met on the ship and were married when they arrived in Sydney.



Emma (Taylor) Burchmore
40 yrs old - born 1821



William Burchmore 80 yrs
old - born 1819



George & Alice Burchmore
in 1917

I don't know much about Harry's childhood but I imagine it must have been a lot of fun and also quite a struggle with so many



House in Arncliffe where Harry lived for many years with some of his siblings (picture taken in 1974).

children living in the same house. His father worked for the NSW Railways at Eveleigh workshops as a fitter and turner but died in 1920 at the untimely age of 57 from a ruptured appendix, leaving Alice with 8 children still living at the home.

After finishing school Harry was apprenticed at the Railways in Sydney to be become an engineer. After successfully passing his examines in Feb 1918 he worked for the railways for a couple of years and then took a job at Australian Glass Manufacturers (AGM) where he worked until he retired at age 62 - retiring from the position of Supervisor in charge of all the machinery and equipment.



Harry with 6 of his brothers and sisters in 1955.
Left to right: Jack, Ethel, Ern, Nell, Billie, May and Harry.



Harry with workmates ca 1958

At sometime, I believe, Flo was boarding at the Burchmore home in Arncliffe although it is hard to understand how there was enough room for her with all their 11 children but maybe most of them had left home at that time. Anyway, and again I'm not absolutely positive about this, but have been told that that is how Flo and Harry met. They were married in April 1932. After a couple of years of marriage they moved from Arncliffe to the wilds of Kingsgrove (a new suburb of Sydney at that time) and built a house where they lived for the rest of their lives. They had two children, Faye born in 1933 and me, Judith, born 1947.



The house Flo and Harry built in Kingsgrove in 1933.

This picture was taken in 1998. The house looks much the same as it did back then but the garden is very different. We had a brick fence across the front and none of those shrubs and trees as the garden was all down the back. The gate at the side wasn't there either as it was an open driveway down to the garage.



Faye's wedding with Judith as Flower Girl 1955



Faye Alice 18 yrs old



Judith about 3 yrs old in front of Kingsgrove house



Harry and Judith 1947

Harry was a very quiet man - he didn't say much but did a lot of thinking.

Harry liked to invent things in his spare time. He built a rotary clothes line that went up and down by water pressure and had the dual purpose of watering the garden each time it came down.



Harry ca 1966 in front of the hydraulic (water) rotary clothes line. He also made the bricks for the garden wall and one of his frogs can be seen in front of the wall. The old shed can be glimpsed in the back right-hand corner.

He was one of the first in Sydney to construct and set up a solar hot water system which provided our household with hot water for many years. He built this himself after seeing the idea in a magazine



around 1964 - years before anyone else had built one (pictured left).

He also invented an alternative system for making bottles at work. Apparently his system made a better quality bottle but was a more expensive method so was never taken up.

These were his successes but he also had some less successful projects.

For example someone gave him a mould for making rather large ornamental frogs for the garden, out of cement. He made a lot of these all of which he painted meticulously and then gave away as presents. Unfortunately he had forgotten about the fact that the cement actually needs a long time to dry before it can be painted and after a few weeks all the paint peeled off and the frogs didn't look so attractive anymore. Several of them were brought back to haunt him.

Another of his ideas was to install central heating in our house. We had a Cosy or coke stove heater in the lounge room and he thought that it was shame that a lot of the heat was just being wasted going out the chimney so he decided to take out a brick in the wall in the room behind the stove so that the heat could circulate into the other rooms - or at least that was the plan. Unfortunately the only thing to circulate was the poisonous fumes. I remember how we all had to stand out in the backyard on a cold rainy winter's day waiting for the fumes to disperse before we could go inside again. He put a metal plate over the missing brick and whenever a visitor asked what was behind that plate we all had a good laugh.

He had a very dry sense of humour too. We had an old shed down the back of our yard made out of corrugated iron. It was very rusty and mum had been nagging him for years to paint it. One day she went out and when she came back in the evening we had a bright pink shed!

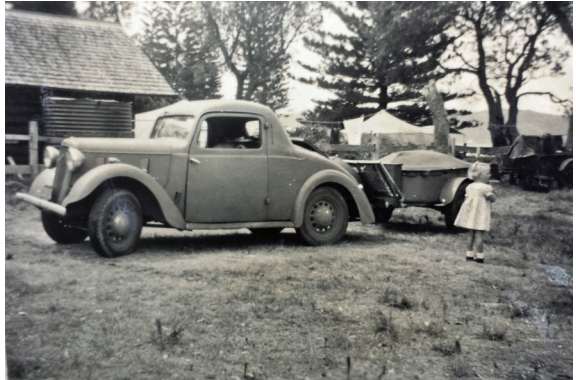
Our first car was an Austin A20 with a dickie seat. For those who don't know what a dickie seat is (also called mother-in-law seat) - it is an upholstered exterior seat which folds into the rear boot of a two-seater pre-World War II car and seats one or two passengers.

We sold this when I was about 6 years old and bought an Austin A40 with an inside back seat (much to the disappointment of my sister and I). Later dad bought his first new car - an EH Holden station wagon. He always maintained that Flo paid for this car by putting aside money from her household budget each week for many years. He and mum did a lot a miles in this car during dad's retirement.



Judith and Harry and the first car -
the Austin A20.

The Austin A20 with
trailer loaded up for our
camping holiday. Un-
fortunately the Dickie
Seat is not visible in this
photo.



Flo, Judith & Harry
leaning on the EH
Holden in front of their
tent at Avoca 1965.

I grew up believing that my grandparents on both sides of the family were dead but when I was about 20 my mother's father died and the story came out. My mother and her siblings thought that their father was such a dreadful man that they refused to have anything to do with him and told everyone he was dead.

I had a good childhood growing up in Kingsgrove with Flo and Harry as my parents.

Harry taught me a lot about life - he taught me to be patient and to listen and learn. I regret that he was not around longer so that I could have learnt more from him.

Flo was a beautiful seamstress and taught me how to sew. She was also a very good cook ("making an exceptional sponge cake") and I know I didn't appreciate her enough. I remember when my cousin Valma lost her son and was thinking of adopting a child she asked my mother for her advice in this matter and my mother said she didn't think it was a good idea to have more children as they grow up to be very selfish and don't appreciate what you do for them. I was about 16 at this time and was probably being a horrible rebellious teenager.

Flo and Harry did a lot of travelling in Australia but never ventured overseas. They spent their annual holiday camping at Avoca Beach on the Central Coast of NSW for many years.

Well that's the story of Flo and Harry.

Harry died of a heart attack aged 69, when they were on a trip to Cooma and the Snowy Mountains in 1970.

I know Flo missed Harry very much when he died and that life was never as good for her again. She died in 1985 in a nursing home in Bexley after a stroke.



I believe this photo is of Harry's mother, Alice, with my sister Faye. It would have been taken in 1933 making Alice 66.

Harry showing his silly side. Wearing my bikini outside our tent at Avoca Beach.



The last photo I have of dad taken on a trip to see the snow in 1968 (pictured with his sister, Ethel, and mum).

Many thanks to my cousins, Ken and Noel Burchmore for setting up the Burchmore Family Website which is a great source of information about the Burchmore side of my family.

Comments from Harry's nephews Ken and Noel Burchmore:

Harry Taylor Burchmore was not only my favorite uncle but a more kindly, helpful, responsible, inventive and loyal man never lived. I know he earned the respect of his whole maintenance department and apart from you and Faye, I suspect that I knew him as well as anyone alive today.

Every work day for the several years when I also worked at ACI Engineering- he in a crucially important supervisory role and me as a lowly cadet- he would detour the few blocks from Stoney Creek Rd, to Abercorn St. in his little green roadster with the dickey seat and I would jam into the front seat along with his regular passenger - neighbour "Snowy" Noton , an ex AIF Colonel who managed the AGM Procurement Dept.

We were always welcome at your home on Wolli St. where I recall him showing me his solar collector powered hot water system which was years ahead of its time. - **Ken Burchmore**

And don't forget the modified Hills Hoist to hydraulics (mains water). He was a quiet and thinking man and Florence made an exceptional sponge cake (all the mothers did in those days!).
-**Noel Burchmore**

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